

welcome everyone I want to thank governor Edwards and his team for hosting us today also want to thank the federal co-chairman Chris Masingill with the Delta Regional Authority and all of the local community political and development partners who have joined us today for this announcement my name is Leslie durham I'm governor Edwards designee to the Delta Regional Authority and for those of you that don't know the Delta Regional Authority is a federal and state partnership that leads economic and development infrastructure investments in 252 counties and parishes across the eighth Delta states in Louisiana there are 56 parishes included they have been a strong partner to the people businesses and communities in Louisiana from Houma to monroe i'm proud to work with the DRA on behalf of governor Edwards and the people across this great state our work is especially needed in times like these as you know families across baton rouge area are digging out from the disastrous impact of the recent storms our communities and businesses are hurting many residents have lost everything everyone with me today is committed to you we represent a partnership of federal state and local resources we have brought together the best the brightest from community business and civic sectors all of us united are committed to a singular purpose we're going to help you rebuild we're going to help our communities he'll we're going to help Louisiana come back stronger with that I am honored to introduce my friend Chris Masingill who will announce a series of investments coming to Louisiana

good morning everyone

Leslie thank you very much for that warm introduction you are a great partner and governor thank you for sharing her with the Delta Regional Authority and we want to say thank you governor for hosting us today I tell you it's exciting i was telling the governor seven years in this post and this is the first opportunity I've had to actually be here in the governor's office in the capital and i'm very excited to be here to be a part of these announcements you know governor you've been in office for eight months but in that time you had to manage storms floods tornadoes tragic events here in Baton Rouge and of course the budget crisis and two legislative sessions and I three legislative sessions and he would remember that but but i can tell you from my perspective in the face of these challenges you have provided a solid foundation of leadership and never wavered in your efforts to find solutions and to bring additional leadership and bring people together and I want to say thank you for doing that i can tell your governor your vision for Louisiana means a bright future for the state and its people in dra is committed to being a strong partner with you i'm excited to have this partnership in our work because today I'm proud to announce more than 72 million dollars in new investments coming to the people in the businesses of Louisiana these strategic investments

will start to strengthen Louisiana's infrastructure they will help better prepare if and when the next disaster strikes they will improve the talents and skills of our workforce help support our entrepreneurs and small business owners and they will help attract and keep companies and good paying jobs right here in the Delta the DRA's mission is to help create jobs build communities and improve lives these investments we believe honor that commitment let me give you a couple of examples we're investing more than a hundred and fifty thousand dollars into go-biz grow biz program with other which will provide multistage small business development education and training across seven parishes in Central Louisiana these investments will help cultivate

and expand the region's entrepreneur ecosystem both attracting and growing Louisiana strong startup community next we're investing in expanded sewer capacity and now I know for a lot of you all the word expanded sewer capacity Probably is not glamorous or sexy but let me talk in playing economic development language for us that means that this investment is leveraging another 30 million dollars 30 million dollars from Sundrop fuels for new research and development it's exactly the kind of investment that dra likes to make it is proud to be a part of this project were upgraded sewer components that were initially constructed in the late fifties and not and not understood to support modern industrial development and new industry and investment means new jobs for the people of Louisiana and a stronger economy for the state

it's a true win-win finally i'm proud to announce that we're investing nearly 275,000 and leveraging another 225,000 into two new water pumps in pain courtville this is an important project particularly because although its too not necessarily glamorous but it's smart investment that will make our part of the work more resilient when disasters occur

you all remember the ef3 tornado that hit the families and communities and prairieville and Belarus area collapsing a water tower serving assumption Paris and damaging their booster station as a result of the disaster there was a lack of redundancy who the water pumping station creating a lack of drinking water if the pump broke down and the power went out this investment fills that gap given the families and the communities of assumption parish the additional security they will have clean and drinkable water in times of need

we have a series of other investments including a major job creating project with central lake village and of course another project with one of our strong partners jobs for America's graduates which I'm gonna let governor Edwards announced but before I do that let me just take a second to thank all of you all have been a part of this partnership and effort from Senator Cassidy and Congressman Abraham and standing in our

entire congressional delegation want to thank you for the support and your leadership to the Delta Regional Authority and of course the people in the leaders that are here today we have an incredible group of people fighting to make Louisiana a great place to live and to do business their work and commitment to the Delta inspires me each and every day I'm blessed to be working with an incredible team with that is my pleasure to introduce our main partner in making strategic investments dra is comprised of the federal side and the states and it is true and it is a true partnership the governor has been an incredible strong voice for your state many of you all know he was just in washington DC meeting with lawmakers and advocating for additional disaster relief for Louisiana and i can tell you this is a governor who stands tall with other governors on our board to advocate for their people to recognize the importance of economic development what it means to have job creation strategies during tough economic times it is an absolute honor to have this kind of relationship with your governor ladies and gentlemen I present to you your governor John bel Edwards

thank you Chris for the introduction but more important for the work you're doing on behalf of the Delta Regional Authority across the entire region but especially here in Louisiana Thank You Leslie for for the work that you're doing and thanks all of you for being with us today and I want to thank the Delta Regional Authority for assisting some of our most vulnerable communities to meet some of their most basic but most pressing infrastructure repair needs each of the seven Louisiana projects is designed to make tangible improvements to cities and towns and rural areas across our state and these projects exemplify the important role that the state of Louisiana and the DRA can share in building and improving the places that are citizens call home and you hear the word use partnership quite often and sometimes it applies and sometimes it doesn't i want you all to know that the relationship that the state has that local government has with the DRA it truly is a partnership and it works for the benefit of everyone in the state of Louisiana two of the awards are for very important programs as opposed to development projects the go bis grow bis program will target small business development and the jobs for Americans graduates program will be expanded by more than thirty percent incredibly important when you look at the central louisiana area what we know is that even though the entire state has seen a downturn here recently if you go back to the fall 2010 at the end of the last recession job growth in Louisiana has been positive overall but you get to Alexandria and points north and it's either been zero or negative and so having a go bis grow is program expanding in that area is incredibly important and the DRA recognizes the need and they're partnering with us to help in a significant way to address that need the jag program jobs for Americans graduates probably the most

successful program in the country of its time

where we target at-risk youth and we want to keep them in school and make sure that they graduate and that they get a job or they go to college or they go into service and it is the best program of its type in the country and there are certain benchmarks that you have to meet & Louisiana has met every benchmark in fact this past year we were the best performing program in the country for jag and so despite the fiscal constraints that we have with the two billion dollar deficit we inherited and and the budget cuts we've had to implement working with the DRA with the private sector and and being very strategic about how we can find these programs were actually going to grow that program by thirty percent and we are extremely excited about what that's going to mean for the people of the state of Louisiana so that they can continue to benefit from the jobs for America graduates now the other five awards address specific needs and certain communities you might imagine since since mayor Jamie Mayo's here Monroe is one of those and in fact the single biggest dra investment in the state of Louisiana this year will be in monroe and for a very important project but in addition to monroe extremely important projects in jonesboro boyce grosse tette and pain courtville interface of the pain courtville project the authority is making a set its second-largest award in the state almost two hundred seventy five thousand dollars to add two new pumps to the communities booster pump station

this project is going to help paincourtville in his recovery from the tornado which struck that community back in February that ef3 tornado was the strongest ever recorded in Assumption Parish and it left the path of destruction for more than 20 miles i will never forget going out there the night that that struck and I don't know it's almost as if tornadoes have a mind of their own and on occasion they hit the most vulnerable targets because it crossed the mississippi river from assumption parish where knocked over water tower

did extensive damage to homes to public infrastructure and then it headed directly for a travel trailer park and then it didn't it wasn't a glancing blow it went straight down the park and at the end of the night when the dust settled about two-thirds of the travel trailers were in one big heap at the far end of the park and you couldn't tell what was what

amazingly the loss of life there was was very minimal but that was a strong tornado and it did extensive damage and this award is going to help Assumption Parish because we were unsuccessful getting the federal government in that case to do a major federal disaster declaration it just didn't reach the level that the federal government will step in and so again we call on the partnerships that we have in place and dra stepped up and so thank you very much in monroe the authority is making its largest single grant in excess of 1

million dollars for needed waterworks improvements to serve northeast Louisiana's News Century Village project construction began earlier this year this is a landmark 88-acre technology and mixed-use development it's going to be across the highway from the Centrelink headquarters and I am so excited about that development it's going to be home to IBM's 400-plus job client innovation center and IBM is going to partner with centurylink on research development and product innovation initiatives and as you all know Centurylink is headquartered right across the street and just last year it formally opened its 300,000 square foot technology center of excellence which was an important additions to its 365,000 put corporate headquarters that company is the number one economic driver in Northeast Louisiana and it is the largest company headquartered in the state of Louisiana so so being able to do these things to to allow this progress to continue is incredibly important and we wouldn't have the ability to do it without the DRAs participation not just in monroe but across the state of Louisiana you know challenging times and we been challenged but challenging times such as these tend to bring out the very best in the people of Louisiana and and as heartbroken as I've been about the people who have been adversely impacted by these floods their lives have been turned upside down i'm also have been very gratified about the way the people of Louisiana have responded to one another and the way the faith-based community of charitable organizations the business sector has all come together in order to make our state more United and I am so convinced that we're going to recover and move forward and in our best days are still ahead of us

I know that and sometimes when you're when you're going through these challenges you know you lose sight of that and and you start to question it perhaps but i believe firmly that Louisiana's best days are ahead of us because we're going to have the courage to make the hard decisions the ones that are best for us and because we have good partners like the Delta Regional Authority we also have a bipartisan spirit when it comes to making sure that we're taking care of our own whether its support for flood recovery assistance or anything else that we're doing and the work that we've been able to do with our congressional delegation with the administration the Obama administration i'm going to tell you I in a short period of time we've gotten a lot accomplished we will know later this week

I think whether we have a real shot at getting a significant appropriation in the continuing resolution that Congress is considering over the next few days so in the ongoing assistance from important organizations such as the DRA is very much appreciated

so we've got an awful lot going on much of it challenges that were we were responding to but we also have a lot of very positive things going to like these

investments were making across the state of Louisiana as a result of our partnership with the DRA so I want to thank again the chairman of the DRA a Christmas and guilt who even months ago I SAT with me and talked about all of the things that the DRA has available for the state of Louisiana and his eagerness to make sure that he was partnering with me so that with Leslie and and with the input from local officials we would be addressing our most pressing needs in the areas of the state that are within the Delta Regional Authority so Chris can I want to thank you very much i want to thank you leslie for your hard work and at this time I'm gonna be followed by Mayor Jamie mayo who's going to talk about the importance of this investment in his community what it's going to mean for the Monroe area northeast louisiana and really for the whole state and then he'll be followed by representative from Sundrop fuels to talk about what this is going to mean for them so thank you very much and mr. mayor for your support good morning thank you very much governor if I could say this like Gomer Pyle you remember him

thank you thank you thank you we are so delighted to be here today and I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those that have been here starting with the governor and what can i say about governor Edwards when he was running he indicated that he wanted to make the state hole and there's no question that this project in the cinnamon roll is a significant slice of the pie that will make it whole so I certainly appreciate him his leadership and also his friendship and chairman massingill not working out say we had lunch earlier and he winked at me so I think you're gonna be okay and i believe we're okay right and Leslie will appreciate you as well but also have my city council member here in which center link and central village it's in her particular district and that is Councilwoman Gretchen and wanted her to come along because I know it's a proud moment for her the other city council members as well as our administration in the city of Monroe and also the the citizen as a whole but we had a great team the North Delta

regional folks mr. Cree who's here and also mr. Waxman everybody has been a mr. Thompson that worked on this project i want to say thank you for that 1 million dollars in the governor's mentioned that Centrelink is a corporate is the largest corporate headquarters in the state of Louisiana we're proud of that we love New Orleans we love baton rouge we love bossier lafayette and all the other great cities also towns and villages but we're proud to have the largest corporate headquarters in the city of monroe and this is going to be significant

now chairman Masingill indicated that sewer is not sexy

I can tell you is very sexy to us in the city of monroe and watched our parish and and all mirrors and city council members i think the same the 1 million

dollars that you're bringing to us and the city of monroe is essential for the development of the central village that will include IBM and so many other businesses restaurants and possible hotel the city of monroe will be will be giving 692 thousand dollars as a match with this project which is significant and I think that goes is to say that we're in a position to be able to provide the match because the city Monroe is in the best financial shape in the city's history we proud of that we're proud of our congressional delegation we appreciate them appreciate president obama because obviously he's worked very very hard he's been here and he's helping the governor and that is significant as well so to everybody
thank you very much for all your work and all you support because it is significant for the city of monroe watched our parish and northeast louisiana thank you very much

hi

Sundrop fuels is proud to work with the town boyce to improve their wastewater treatment facilities in support of our advanced bio reforming center to be located in Rapides Parish we look forward to creating jobs and opportunities in Central Louisiana as we conduct and create operate both the advanced bio reforming center and the world's largest biorefinery in the near future

in addition to producing gasoline and an environmentally friendly manner both plants will also help to grow the plantation timber industry in the region
thank you for your continued support every one of our projects and for the grant to support this project and Boyce thank you

ok with that we will we will take some questions

how is that only slightly off topic but go ahead go ahead

well well first of all that there's a lot involved there the executive order has to do with what i will approve as governor and the board of an issue and commerce it exercises its own discretion as well and its discretion is circumscribed by the rules making process and so that it is in the the process of promulgating new rules that will govern its decision-making going forward and they're there is no backtracking from what I said we will do as a state to to ring that program in to make sure that it's focused on job creation and that we are not giving away local tax dollars because you know the state doesn't participate in the revenue that comes from the property taxes we're not going to give those dollars away without locals having input and there's no reason for our program to be the most generous in the nation by a long shot

so that we're just called upon to do more the state in order to send resources back to the local government is it but now we also have to make sure that as we implement these changes we do so in a way that allows for the

stability necessary in the business community because the new rules of will affect new applications and and in fact renewals it as you know but we want to make sure that that the entities that are applying for the industrial tax exemption or for the renewals they they have the ability to move forward with with the certainty that that those applications and those rules that were in the pipeline before the changes became effective you know that they're going to be treated one way and then when the changes become effective they'll be treated another yes

yeah because it became apparent we could get it

no well let me ask answer the question we submitted as

part of the overall request which was multifaceted and had other moving parts

but the single biggest part in terms of the money involved and probably in the importance of our ability to recover quickly and fully from this flood

disaster but not really just this one in august but the Marches well because the

community development block grant funding that we are seeking is for both

events is the community development block grant program our our initial

request based upon the damage estimates that we had was two billion dollars now

we've been working nonstop around the clock

not just at the state level but in in coordination with the federal partners

at hood at HUD housing and urban development also at the office of

management and budget in Washington in order to figure out what that request

should be if it should exceed 2 billion dollars one of the reasons that the

request is going to be 2 billion 8am 2.8 billion i should say is because i had an

in conversation with folks in the White House he said that they want to make

sure that that the resilience piece as it relates to public infrastructure

really gets plussed up that way they know that they can have the peace of mind of

knowing that the investment they're going to make in Louisiana will pay off

in the long run by reducing the likelihood that we have this type of

flooding going forward

one of the things we're really focused on and what this extra money is going to

help us do is rather than doing what was done after after Katrina where we

focused on elevating businesses and elevating homes how about we do flood

control projects and floodplains that reduce the baseball elevation and

obviate the need to raise structures because if you if you're going to tell a

homeowner in response to a once-in-a 3,000 year flood event that one of the

things are going to have to do in addition to fixing their home without

flood insurance eighty percent

these people don't have flood insurances they're going to actually have to raise

their home to that expense could very easily make it where that's just not a

viable option for them and they they walk away from their homes the banks and

mortgage holders are going to be taking damage entity back that and it won't be

getting the payments on that and it's not good for the community there because we need people make a decision to go home

we need people making the decision to reopen their business and they have to be able to stay open and and so that the cdbg program is going to be incredibly important and that extra 800 million dollars is all about

plus the resiliency effort as it relates to the public infrastructure

ok I'm not sure I fully understand your question but the president will be meeting this afternoon or at least it's scheduled to meet with the leaders of the House and the Senate Senator McConnell and Reid and and House members speaker Ryan and leader Pelosi and they're going to be talking about the continuing resolution which could move as I understand as early as this Wednesday coming out of the Senate obviously this is the first opportunity for us to have an appropriation included to assist us with the with the recovery efforts and it is our goal to have our request incorporated into the continuing resolution I am scheduled to go on Wednesday and spend Wednesday and Thursday we were very busy last Thursday and Friday in Washington but still unable to make all the meetings that we want to make I'm going to go back and we rescheduling out beep to me but speaker Ryan and with chairman Rogers of the Appropriations Committee but also have a meeting with the entire congressional delegation always the afternoon and additional meetings with cabinet secretaries of transportation and health and human services because there's some transportation funding we're looking for

there's also block grant funding for social services to address mental health issues that arise every time we have these floods as well and we are trying to put together additional meetings beyond those as well

any other questions yes ma'am

well first of all it is a confusing situation and it is hard to cut through the heart of the matter

this rain event the probability of this event happening in any given year is one in a thousand the national flood insurance program and our flood maps are based upon the probability of a rain of been happening once every hundred years so this rain event is not going to inform any changes in the national flood insurance program they won't take any maps and change them if you weren't living in a flood zone before you're not going to be living in the flood zone mail because of this flood event but it's not quite that simple because you have local governments in order to take advantage of an opportunity to make sure that that the residents in their communities have the lowest possible flood insurance programs premiums local government has ordinances that require the elevation of homes in certain circumstances where they actually flood and received substantial damage which means they're fifty percent or more damaged now it is possible for the local governmental entities to buy ordinance

suspend or eliminate those requirements

the problem is how does that interact with the National Flood Insurance Program and only congressional action can change that and so you know I'm hopeful that Congress will come together and that they will make some changes where at least they suspend that that provision for a period of years to allow people in Louisiana have longer but we are not talking about people who don't live in a flood zone

I think what we're talking about here these people who live in a flood zone and whose houses or not at or above the base flood elevation if they flooded in this event and that flood damage them substantially which means fifty percent more their value then based on their current I'm sorry their local ordinances they may have an obligation to to raise homes and so this is going to play out over a period of time I wish I had

you know more definitive information for those homeowners but I don't right now because it's it's based both in what happens locally and whether Congress does something with the flood insurance program I heard the lady one more I I should have recognized Senator Ward and Representative Brown who are here and I think they're the only two legislators here I want to thank you for your presence because it's incredibly late we talk about partnerships it's not just the executive branch in the DRA and local government it's our state representatives and state senators as well so thank you very much for being here

well first of all I'm concerned that that Congress may not move the package now but not for that reason this is a continuing resolution and is if you just turn on the news you see how difficult it is for Congress to do anything these days and and and we are trying to get an appropriation made to aid us in our recovery efforts just several weeks after the flood event itself and so there's a lot that could happen I'm actually optimistic that it is going to happen now with respect to the reference you made to the votes of some of our delegation members on sandy relief I will tell you that I had an opportunity to speak to Republicans and Democrats in the house and in the Senate last week in Washington and none of them led me to believe that that they would take that into consideration as to whether Louisiana would get the relief that we're asking for

thank you very much for being here I look forward to many more days like today when we can announce projects for Louisiana that are going to make a difference in the quality of lives of our citizens and make our communities that much more vibrant so that so that we can really grow and strengthen our state set the stage for more economic development and investment and job creation and especially working with the DRA were able to do that in the most not oh I guess in in the parts of our state that that oftentimes of the hardest to

deliver this assistance to and that that's why I appreciate that partnership
so make it so much and I think you all recognize how important it is and that's
why you here today so thank you as well god bless